



Felton Institute Newsletter

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TRANSFORMING LIVES
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SPOTLIGHT

Joshua Harrison

STARR Case Manager
Justice Services Division



Supporting Treatment and Reducing Recidivism (STARR) is one of the newest programs under the agency's Social Justice Division. Caseworkers like Joshua Harrison assist individuals charged, arrested, or incarcerated for an offense, by providing them with a source of compassion and support to help move them forward in life.

Joshua believes that change happens when people are given the guidance they need to draw on their strengths and realize their potential to live fulfilling and happy lives. This is the philosophy he embraces as a Case Manager for STARR.

"It's called soft hand-holding. I typically meet with the client in jail. I do an assessment and put together a care plan on how we can most effectively and efficiently help their lives to combat recidivism. Whether it is employment, education, or housing, we are able to support them."

Before Felton, Joshua worked with Phoenix Project SF and the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department. Two years ago, Joshua started with Felton's [Young Adult Court](#), also under the Social Justice Division, before shifting to STARR. Helping people has always been a life goal. Growing up in an inner-city housing development in San Francisco, Joshua witnessed many in his neighborhood, older people and peers fall by the wayside due to lack of resources and attention. "It's a passion of mine to help others who think they couldn't be helped. I have a Sociology degree from San Francisco State. I was always searching for more impactful work."

Building relationships and keeping open communication lines are skills he learned early in his life that help Joshua as a Case Manager today. He appreciates having nurturing parents who instilled a solid work ethic and caring mentors who helped keep this middle child on a straight and narrow path. As Joshua builds relationships with those he serves, he notes that the secret sauce is about being direct and keeping it real when setting goals. "This is a client-driven practice. Set realistic expectations...meet the person with no biases and meet them at face value."

Joshua likes to celebrate both the big and small victories of his clients: staying sober for 30 days, graduating from high school, or getting a job.

"I had a client whose focus was on being sober for a week at a time. That was a victory. We had an open line of communication. He could call me anytime. And when he did relapse, he came in. He didn't hide. I asked him about what he wanted to do moving forward."

“It's all about moving forward because we have to live in the moment.”

To relax, Joshua likes to coordinate his sock drawer by color, binge on Netflix shows, and take virtual bike rides throughout small Italian villages on his Peloton. Joshua stays humble by this motto, "My floor is someone's ceiling and vice versa so be thankful for where you are in life and never look down on people."

For more information about Felton's Justice Services, please contact Curtis Penn at cpenn@felton.org or call (415) 474-7310 x777.

SPOTLIGHT

Marcee Dillard

Engagement Specialist, FEST
Justice Services Division



Marcee Dillard begins her day with a bounce in her step and a smile in her heart. "It's a matter of necessity," she explains as a member of the [Felton Engagement Specialist Team \(FEST\)](#) under the Social Justice Division. While most people are still grappling with their own life's challenges in a pandemic, Marcee is a fearless frontline worker, helping the insecurely housed and unhoused populations.

Her typical day often starts with a visit to an encampment site.

"I usually get a dispatch of the location and the clients I would meet. For an encampment assessment, I'll meet up with a social worker from the Department of Public Health and bring around 20 hygiene bags filled with t-shirts, snacks, and hygiene supplies. We knock on the tent doors, and we ask if anyone has signs and symptoms of COVID-19. If they do, we get EMS services and get them to a quarantine hotel. If they don't, we provide them with the Felton hygiene bags, and we ask if they have any needs. I bring along information for MediCal, CalFresh and ID vouchers. I engage, build a positive rapport with them, and try to get them the proper referrals to the services that they need."

FEST is comprised of Engagement Specialists who are skilled case managers working in collaboration with the San Francisco Departments of Public Health, Public Works, Homelessness and Supportive Housing, and the San Francisco Police Department. Engagement Specialists provide outreach and service linkage to support clients by addressing any combination of substance use, mental health, and physical health needs.

Born and raised in San Francisco, Marcee has seen first-hand how hard survival can be in the city.

"Where I'm from in San Francisco is known as the Western Addition or the Filmore neighborhood. I have seen the effects of gentrification and watched how poverty turned rampant in my community. I know business owners who are now homeless, and it doesn't seem right."

From scrubs to the streets, Marcee reflects on how she started her career at 18 as a medical assistant. Pivoting from the medical field into social work, Marcee worked in peer education and counseling before landing a job at the Roots Community Health Center. She made a leap to Felton Institute, first joining the CORE program in Alameda County before shifting to the [FEST Team](#) in September. She is also currently a student at both San Francisco City College and Laney College, working towards her Community Health Worker Certificate. And while her job and schoolwork seem like a lot to balance, Marcee shares that it's not difficult to keep motivated.

In her spare time, Marcee enjoys visiting the Pier at San Francisco's Embarcadero. She loves playing tourist, enjoying the boardwalk games, and grabbing some crab cakes. With a large spectrum of interests, she is equally at home talking about hair and nails as she is discussing the meaning of life. A self-confessed nerd, Marcee says reading philosophy books is her to-go leisure activity.

While most people look back at 2020 as a year of disruption, for Marcee, it has been a year of opportunity.

"I'm grateful for Felton. It's in 2020 that my career at Felton launched amid this pandemic. Every day is a win. Every day I'm out there, connecting folks to services. I haven't felt this fulfilled in a long time. My positive takeaway from 2020 is that it's the year I became a member of Felton."

For more information about Felton's Felton Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) Program, please visit the [FEST program page](#) or contact FEST Program Director Curtis Penn at cpenn@felton.org or (415) 474-7310 x777.

2020 AWARDS

FELTON STAFF 2020 SERVICE AWARDS

Charlotte
Pinkney



Milagro
Castro

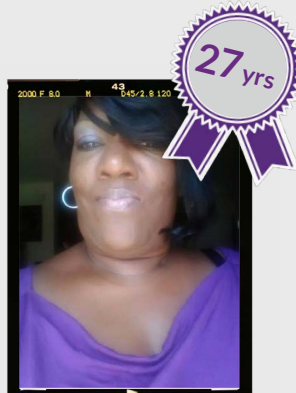


Victoria
Gray

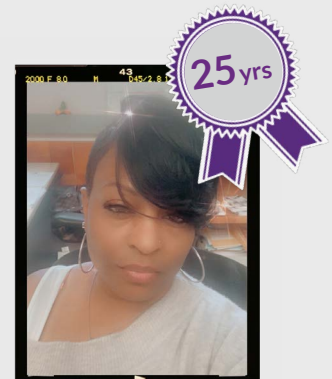


Tony
Tepper

Ann
Douglas

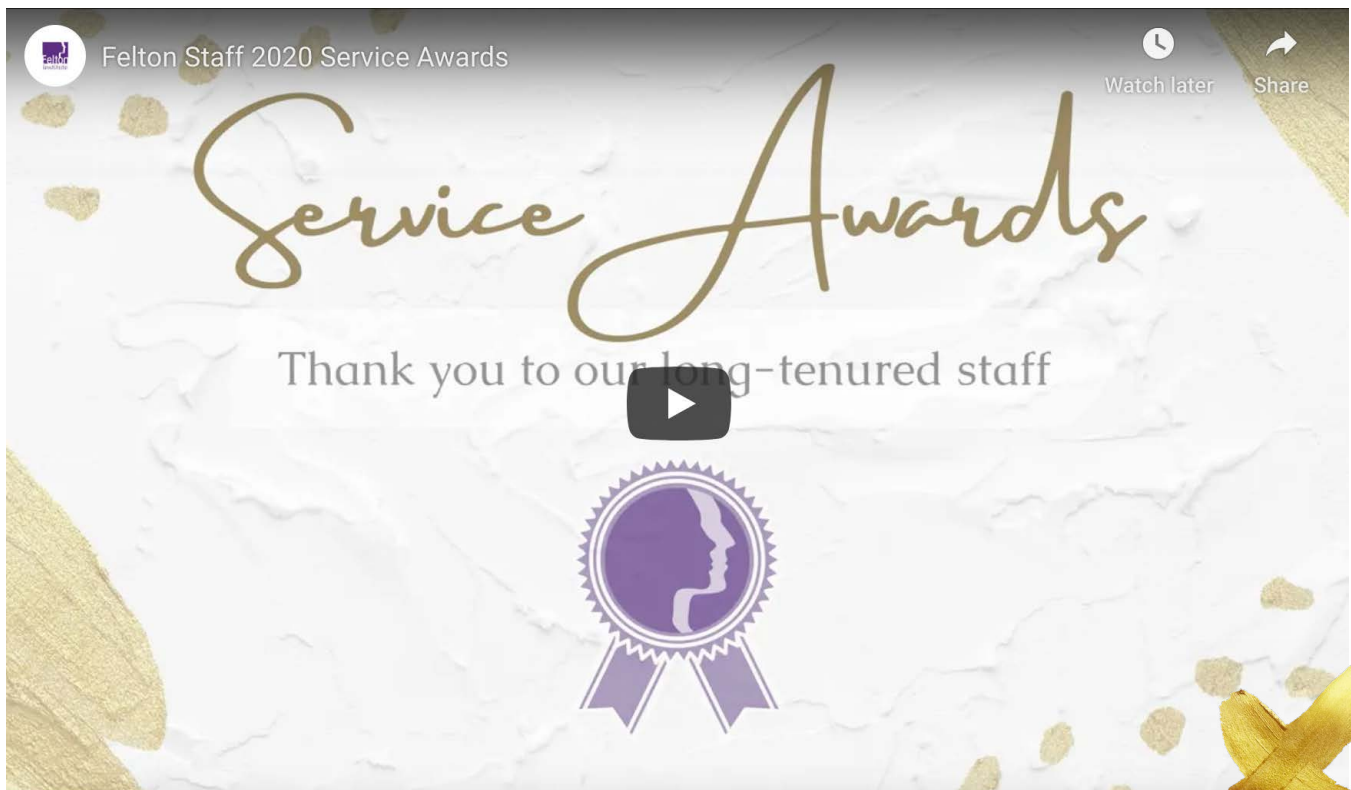


Sherece
Cooks



FEATURED VIDEO

YOU MADE A DIFFERENCE



How A Year of Disruption Became a Year of Resilience & Partnership

2020 was a year defined by disruption.

COVID-19. Wildfires. Heatwave. Protests and social unrest with a turbulent political climate during a historical pandemic. Everyone, everywhere had to learn how to adapt. And do so quickly.



Across the globe, entire nations were on lockdown to fight the spread of the coronavirus. Consumers hoarded personal paper products; the business and education communities were forced into remote engagement environments as the medical and scientific community began combatting the enigmas presented by this deadly disease. In this environment, Felton Institute committed to the work of providing continuous essential services to the most vulnerable and underserved populations, families, and individuals more susceptible to the ravages of the virus across five San Francisco Bay Area counties.

Providing behavioral health care in this environment meant facing a myriad of challenges. To name a few: isolation of older citizens; food insecurity of families; increased anxiety and paranoia of those with long-term mental health problems; and other societal vulnerabilities that come with rising rates of unemployment, homelessness, and overburdened health services. In this “new normal” of living, Felton’s workforce earned its title as “essential workers”.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIP

The pandemic has fundamentally changed the delivery of social work, education, and mental health services. The State of California enacted [new educational guidelines](#) and [Telehealth regulations](#) as a mechanism to ensure continuity of essential services. Quickly, Felton Institute adopted its programs to continue to serve in this new way.

In March, [Early Psychosis Emergency Operations](#) worked diligently to ensure program participants would receive continuous intensive behavioral health support. Anticipating the surge of health care needs due to COVID-19, the goal was to prevent psychiatric crisis and reduce in-patient psychiatric hospitalizations and ER visits. Felton met this need by adapting mental health services to digital platforms throughout the agency, including the [Deaf Community and Counseling Services \(DCCS\)](#).

2020's compounding of pandemic induced stresses created an overwhelming undercurrent of unease that pushed some to suicidal crisis. Felton's [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#) supported distressed callers, after implementing a cloud-based calling system, made possible with a partnership with Cisco Systems. Amazingly, the upgrade was completed in a mere four days, so volunteers and staff could stay mobilized and continue taking calls safely from home, in compliance with Shelter-in-Place orders.



Felton partnered with the [Department of Children, Youth and their Families](#), the [Office of Early Care and Education](#), and [First Five San Francisco](#) to launch the [ECE Community Hub](#) for children 5-13 years old. The free program is aimed at supporting elementary students who lack the necessary resources to support remote learning. With funding from the [California Public Utilities Commission](#), the Senior Division started San Francisco's

first "Tech Squad" to connect older adults to online technology and provide essential training for those who have never been connected before. In June, Felton proudly applauded sixteen of its Hilltop High School seniors graduating from its [Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Program](#). The [virtual graduation ceremony](#) allowed friends and family to celebrate with the graduates online.

Felton quickly adapted its programs that required face-to-face contact, with the health of clients and staff top-of-mind. To address concerns of social distancing, health, and safety, community support was crucial to keeping these operations running.

In April 2020, when the pandemic was still in its infancy, the three-ply surgical masks were in short supply and very necessary for members of Felton's [Senior Division](#) to maintain programs and services at its San Francisco and Alameda offices. Felton received over 400 masks from Operation Mask Lift, which was created to provide N95 masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) to essential workers.



In partnership with the [San Francisco Food Bank](#), [Felton's Family Support Program](#) increased food supply to double the amounts in the regular weekly diaper and food bank, which provides fresh fruit, vegetables, and additional items to families on-site. Maintaining social distance protocols, families received the pre-packed items to alleviate the hardships brought about by COVID-19. Felton also provided "literacy bags" for children enrolled in early care and education programs.

Planning even began for expanding two additional Community Hubs for pregnant and parenting teens who need support with distance learning. Despite the challenges of the year, construction for a [new ECE site location is underway in the Mission District](#).

SUPPORTING RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS

In 2020, the [Justice Division](#) programs grew by 50% in San Francisco and Alameda Counties, due to the urgency to support the needs of individuals leaving incarceration and returning to our communities. Interests in reducing the spread of the virus in overcrowded communal environments hastened releases.

Felton's [Center for Reentry Excellence \(CORE\)](#) was developed to assist those seeking support finding their way back to community and family. It is a powerful accompaniment to Felton's other justice programs: Young Adult Court (YAC) and Supporting Treatment and Reducing Recidivism (STARR). These programs are designed to divert individuals from incarceration, prevent recidivism, and support families and incarcerated men and women transitioning from jails and prisons.

Extending services to the unhoused as part of Felton's social justice commitment was intensified in the summer months of 2020 during California wildfire season. For those without shelter, the smoky skies and harmful air quality were especially concerning for those forced to live outdoors. The insecurely housed and homeless populations were left incredibly vulnerable. With skilled service and determination, the front liners from the Felton Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) bravely faced the smoky environment and possible exposure to COVID19 going into encampments to do pre-resolution assessments, making certain tents were six feet apart, and educating inhabitants about COVID19.

In September of last year, the [Department of Public Health](#) and Felton launched the Felton Street Case Management Team, addressing low threshold case management for unhoused populations. Our social workers attended to 25 site locations, including Shelter-in-Place or Zip Hotels. They worked with tenants handling underlying medical health conditions, connecting them to their appointments, procuring documentation, and getting referrals for eligible services.

LOOKING TO 2021

For the past 131 years, Felton Institute has transformed our models of care when circumstances dictate change. 2020 became the year for us to learn and adapt to approach work differently. Accordingly, we identified the problems, found solutions, and discovered more opportunities for growth.

It will be no different in 2021. Felton will continue navigating new territory.

We are resilient and prepared for the newly emerging needs. Together, empowered by community partners, funders, and supporters, we can dig deep into resources and emerge with renewed strengths.

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